

**AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:**

Kindly replace paragraph [0014] with the following amended paragraph:

During normal operation when neither maintenance nor alignment of the laser beam are being performed, the hollow tube 22b and bar 25 can be retained in position by installing a locking sleeve or shield 72 on the outside of bar 25 between an end of the slidable sleeve 26 and the end of the hollow tube 22b, as shown in Fig.

1. The locking sleeve 72 can be retained in position through the use of a latch assembly 72a, 72b, thus preventing the sliding sleeve 26 from being moved away from the end 25b of the bar 25, and preventing hollow tube 22b from being slid telescopingly along the tube 25 so as to be moved off the flange 33a of laser beam bending block 32a (and thereby shortening the effective length of the tube arrangement 20, 22b) since the distance between bending block 32a and bending block 32b is fixed as a result of the overall system constraints, such as shown in Fig.

4.